

Eric William Mackey
Waterbury, VT
September 22, 2023

Dear Judge Donnelly:

I am writing on behalf of Douglass Mackey. I am his younger brother of two years. We were raised in Colorado and moved to Vermont when we were in middle school. Growing up, I looked up to Doug in a few different ways but primarily in an academic and athletic sense. Soccer, basketball, track and field; whatever he did, I wanted to do, but better. I enrolled in all the honors classes with the toughest teachers that he took and, when he was accepted into Middlebury College, I strived to follow in his footsteps at a similar prestigious school. When I visited him for the first time at Middlebury, he said something that sticks with me to this day. but that I didn't really take into great consideration at the time. Upon introducing me to his roommates and friends, he said, referring to me, "This is the better-looking, more athletic, more popular version of me." At the time, the praise did not register.

Doug was never a social butterfly, he was an introvert with a dry wit who didn't get out much in high school. I think our experiences surrounding our move to Vermont shaped us more than we knew at the time. I was lucky enough to make a good group of close friends in Vermont with whom I stay in touch to this day - - something I'm not sure he ever experienced or developed - - and as a result I had much more of a social life growing up. As a freshman in high school, when he was a junior, we both made the varsity soccer team, and I ended up starting and receiving the playing time that he might've been expecting to get.

I include all of this because, for the life of me, I have been trying to conceptualize how my brother, a smart, quiet, introverted person, became an obnoxious internet troll and what my role might have been in leading up to it. After college, when Doug moved immediately to NYC, and I stuck around VT, we didn't stay in touch very much. From 2012-2017, I think I only visited him twice. On one of these visits one of his roommates told me they were surprised that I was his brother, because we were so different. I said, what do you mean? Your brother spends most of his time in his room. At the time, I didn't think much of it and probably took it as a compliment without thinking as much of what his roommate was saying about Doug.

In hindsight, Doug was depressed, a young man who grew up in rural VT struggling in NYC. I'm not trying to rationalize or excuse his behavior. I'm trying to paint a picture of the struggles I now recognize he was going through and express my own sincere regret

that, as his brother, I couldn't provide the support system that he so clearly needed at the time.

Fast forward to the spring of 2017. I hit a tree head-on spring skiing. Three weeks in a medically induced coma. Months of rehabilitation, lucky, really, to fully recover from a severe traumatic brain injury. From this time, to when Doug was "doxxed" in 2018, I spent more time with my family, and Doug in particular, than I ever could have anticipated. Despite me never having been there for him, despite me always being the pain-in-the-ass younger brother, despite me always trying to show him up, he was my biggest supporter. He would keep me honest with my rehab and therapies. I'd never known him to be outspoken, but he was adamant that I needed to go the gym, I needed to drink the milkshakes that he made for me every day, I needed to eat my bacon in the morning (I lost 30 pounds in the hospital), I needed to continue to see the speech and occupational therapists daily despite my false convictions that I was "fine" and just needed to go back to my old life. This period, I think, best exemplifies what my brother means to me. Quietly, but firmly, Doug was able to provide both support and structure, even if he didn't have it or recognize a need for it in his own life.

I think Doug finally found this support and structure in rehab in Florida starting in 2018. He was married this past winter, and it was the first time that I've seen him genuinely happy in years. I talked with his best men, who were from the rehab place, and they told me how Doug was their mentor and how, similarly to my experience, he provided firm support and structure for them. I think his problem was recognizing that he needed that same firm support and structure in his own life. I think the biggest example of how he has finally found that is that he is married. He never dated, and I think the reason for that was that he neglected himself. He was always focused on others, for better or for worse, but he kept it all to himself. In the internet age, clearly, this preoccupation with others extended to trolling online despite my firsthand experience with him never, ever treating anybody that way in real life.

It's been a long, difficult road these past five years since Doug was first doxxed, and then charged, and then convicted. It's been tough for my relationship with him. It took me until this past winter to fully reconcile with him. It's put some of my other relationships at risk. It absolutely crushed my parents. Within a year, both of their sons were in rehab for wildly different things in their own traumatic ways. With extended family and other relationships in the community - - I as well as my parents still live in small town Vermont - - I'm not sure some relationships will ever be the same.

I hope that this letter gives you a little bit of a sense of how Doug might've become so immersed online and how he has, in my opinion, put in the time and effort to work through and solve some of the underlying issues that go all the way back to his

childhood. He had dug himself a hole. From 2018 to 2020, even before he was charged, Doug faced enormous consequences for his actions and rose to the challenge, and I hope you take this into account at sentencing.

Sincerely,
Eric William Mackey
Waterbury, VT 05676